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## *House of Representatives*

### STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ED CASE OF HAWAII THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2005

#### INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO INCLUDE MACADAMIA NUTS IN THE MANDATORY COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN-LABELING PROGRAM

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to include macadamia nuts in the mandatory country-of-origin labeling program established in the 2002 Farm Bill. The provisions for macadamia nuts would be similar to those for peanuts whereby roasted and flavored nuts in cans or other packaging would be labeled, but not nuts that are used for candy or as ingredients in other foods.

Hawaii produces the highest quality macadamia nuts in the world. The premium macadamia nut product--and the one where the quality, of the nut is most apparent--is the roasted and flavored nuts in cans or other packaging. Using lower quality nuts for these types of products when the packaging implies a Hawaii origin damages Hawaii macadamia growers in two ways: by decreasing demand for Hawaiian nuts (and therefore prices), and by damaging the reputation of Hawaiian macadamia nuts.

Country-of-origin labeling will give my Hawaii growers a well-deserved competitive advantage based on the quality of their product. Hawaii was the pioneer in developing a national and international market for macadamia nuts and many producers in other countries trade upon Hawaii's reputation to market their nuts.

The long-term viability of Hawaii's agriculture is tied to our ability to distinguish our high-quality products from those produced in other countries.

And the cachet of Hawaii origin is also a market advantage. I have no doubt in the superiority of Hawaiian papayas, pineapples, mangoes, bananas, and macadamia nuts. Country-of-origin labeling will make it easier for consumers to distinguish among different origins and will result in a market advantage for Hawaii farmers.

For all of these reasons, my bill is fully supported by the Hawaiian macadamia nut industry. Currently, the mandatory country-of-origin labeling law applies to farm-raised and wild fish and shellfish; ground and muscle cuts of beef, lamb, and pork; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; and peanuts. Country-of-origin labeling for fish and shellfish began on September 30, 2004; labeling for fresh produce, meats, and peanuts is currently mandated to begin on September 30, 2006.

I ask for my colleagues' support for adding macadamia nuts to the country-of-origin labeling law so that my macadamia nut farmers can enjoy the same marketing benefits as growers of American peanuts.